Joker says GMA offer of reconciliation 'all for show'

Story below, Col. 6

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

'Terrors' wow captive audience

By Volt Contreras

BAYANI Fernando came out in a hot-pink costume and proudly called himself "The Walking Grind," a persona inspired by his ubiquitous legacy as MMDA chair: sidewalk mini-toilets.

TERRORS A10



Friday, November 14, 2003 • 38 pages / vol. 18 / no. 339

website: www.inq7.net



LEGAL test case fails: Rod Strunk would have been the first American citizen to be extradited by the US government to the Philippines.

Strunk home free; Kaye blames DOJ

US judge throws out extradition request

By Leila B. Salaverria and Philip C. Tubeza

THE EXTRADITION case against Rod Lauren Strunk, prime suspect in the killing of his wife, actress Nida Blanca, was lost due to the Department of Justice's "negligence," the lawyer of Blanca's daughter Kaye Torres said yesterday.

"The DOJ and the NBI (National Bureau of Investigation) are to be blamed for this fiasco," former Court of Appeals Justice Hermin Demetrio said. "Ms Kaye Torres and I have proof of their negligence which we will present on Monday during a press conference."

The press conference is scheduled for 10 a.m. at the residence of Torres in White Plains Subdivision in Quezon City.

Strunk can walk free after US District Court Judge Gregory Hollows denied the DOJ request for him to be extradited to the Philippines.

Alma Mallonga, a lawyer of Strunk's, said that as of 1:30 p.m. (Philippine time) yesterday, her client was still in jail in Sacramento, California, but would be

STRUNK A6



A TEARFUL Kaye Torres, daughter of the murdered actress, Nida Blanca, observed the second death anniversary of her mother last week at the Loyola Memorial still crying for justice.

Judge's 'body language': She smiled, smirked

By Volt Contreras, Tina Santos and Philip C. Tubeza

QUEZON City Judge Teresita Yadao was already showing the body language of a biased court official even before she junked the Kuratong Baleleng case, according to "running priest" Robert Reyes.

"She would always smile when glancing at the defense lawyers (of Sen. Panfilo Lacson) and smirk when she was listening to the prosecution," Reyes said, recalling the two hearings of the so-called case before Yadao's court.

Reyes took to criticizing even the judge's "behavior in court" as he joined private lawyers in denouncing Yadao's ruling as a mockery or "travesty of justice."

On Wednesday, Yadao dismissed the case against Lacson and his 33 co-accused on the ground that there was insufficient evidence that 11 suspected members of the Kuratong Baleleng gang had been summarily executed. The accused claimed that the suspected bank robbers died in a shootout in 1995.

"How can a decision be done so quickly, so easily? There was hardly a chance for the prosecution to state their case," he wondered aloud at a press conference.

"This is not just being reason

JUDGE A10

GMA rebukes foes for violent protest

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Armand N. Nocum

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday blamed "unscrupulous political leaders" for egging on the poor to stage Wednesday's protest rally in Makati City—even as ousted President Joseph Estrada literally distanced himself from the mass action.

"I have nothing to do with that. I'm too far away from there," Estrada said, speaking from Camp Capinpin in Tanay, Rizal, where he is detained on plunder and graft charges.

In a telephone interview with the Inquirer, Estrada strongly con-

GMA REBUKES A10

Reconciliation? Joker says it's 'all for show'

By Christine O. Avendaño, Armand N. Nocum and Juliet Labog-Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo's "total reconciliation" plan met with undisguised skepticism in the Senate. Even administration senators could not muster enough enthusiasm for the new venture.

"That's all for show," a smiling Sen. Joker Arroyo told reporters, before dismissing the issue as "not worth commenting (on)."

Senate President Franklin Drilon, who attended Wednesday's national prayer breakfast, where Ms Macapagal launched her reconciliation initiative, was non-committal. He told reporters, in jest, that he was "invoking his right to privacy" when asked for comment.

Three other members of the administration coalition in the

RECONCILIATION A10



PAIN IN THE...

...knee, explains Imelda Marcos before the Sandiganbayan to justify why she arrived from her trip two weeks late. (Story on Page A2.)

Wreckage of 'suicide' US warship found in Subic

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk



USS LANIKAI

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT ZONE—Divers have found the wreck of the USS Lanikai, which US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had sent on a suicide mission with 12 Filipinos among its 18-member crew, thus ending the search for what its late officer aboard had called "the last surface warship to leave Manila and survive."

The century-old wooden ship sank during a storm in 1946, or 57 years ago, while anchored at the Subic Naval Base for repairs. It was found lying at a depth of 308 feet in the remote Nabasan Bay west of here on Oct. 5 by divers from Mastervdive, a company commissioned by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority.

"It's of great historical importance," noted Capt. Victor Manuu, SBMA senior deputy administrator for operations, said on Thursday.

Whatever is known of the schooner, as wooden warships were called during World War II, was told by its own officer US Navy Lt. Kemp Tolley, according to Masterdive president Brian Homan.

Tolley, who retired as an admiral, left two memoirs. One was the book, "Cruise of Lanikai," which was published by the Naval Institute Press of the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Another was an article in the January 1967 edition of Shipmate, the journal of the

WRECKAGE A4

IRAQ'S DEADLIEST

19 Italians killed by suicide bomber

NASIRIYAH, Iraq— A suicide bomber blew up a truck packed with explosives at an Italian paramilitary base in this southern Iraq city on Wednesday killing at least 28 people, 19 of them Italians — the deadliest attack against a US ally since the occupation began.

About 2,300 Italian troops are in southern Iraq and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi has said they will stay.

Elsewhere in Iraq, at least two more US soldiers were killed and three others wounded in separate roadside bomb attacks. Insurgents have now killed 158 US troops since President George W. Bush declared major combat in Iraq over on May 1.

Grappling with an expanding insurgency, US forces backed by an AC-130 gunship destroyed a dye factory in southern Baghdad on Wednesday evening, setting off explosions that reverberated through the capital. Two Iraqis were also killed in an Apache helicopter strike against a van used to launch mortar attacks on the US military.

The suicide bombing in the relatively quiet Shiite Muslim city of Nasiriyah prompted Portugal to decide to send 128

ITALIANS A11



THE TROUBLE WITH GOOD-BYE

Saying good-bye is hard to do for the Villaroel family at the Funeraria Paz inside Manila Memorial Park shortly before burial rites at high noon on Thursday. The family grief is compounded by what they called the "brutal" killing of Col. Panfilo Villaroel. (Story on Page A2.)

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Villaruel buried amid calls for justice

House to amend impeachment rules, says JDV

Trip was most stressful—Imelda

Coco tillers sue Danding for plunder before Ombudsman

'Weng' brings rains

Strunk home free; Kaye blames DOJ

From page A1

[illegible]

No appeal

[illegible]

No lack of documents

[illegible]

Good as final

[illegible]

Trial of co-accused

[illegible]



WHO DONE IT? All-time favorite actress, Nida Blanca, was stabbed to death in the parking lot of a condominium building in Greenhills, San Juan.

[illegible]

Shocked

[illegible]

Wreckage of 'suicide' US warship found in Subic

From page A1

[illegible]

Promise: Japan

[illegible]

Funny, heroic

[illegible]

Aborted mission

[illegible]

Third task

[illegible]

Last destination

[illegible]

Looters' find?

[illegible]

Naval museum

[illegible]

SPORTS

Editor Teddyvic E. Melendres
Assistant Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

Ginebra, TNT seek clinchers

IBC telecast off

Riyadh blast claims Filipino fatality

Fash Detergent rips Blu Star; Sunkist-UST up

By Marc Anthony Reyes

BAP gets backing from Fiba

By Marc Anthony Reyes



ITF QUARTERFINALIST

Pacquiao deserves respect

SPECTATOR

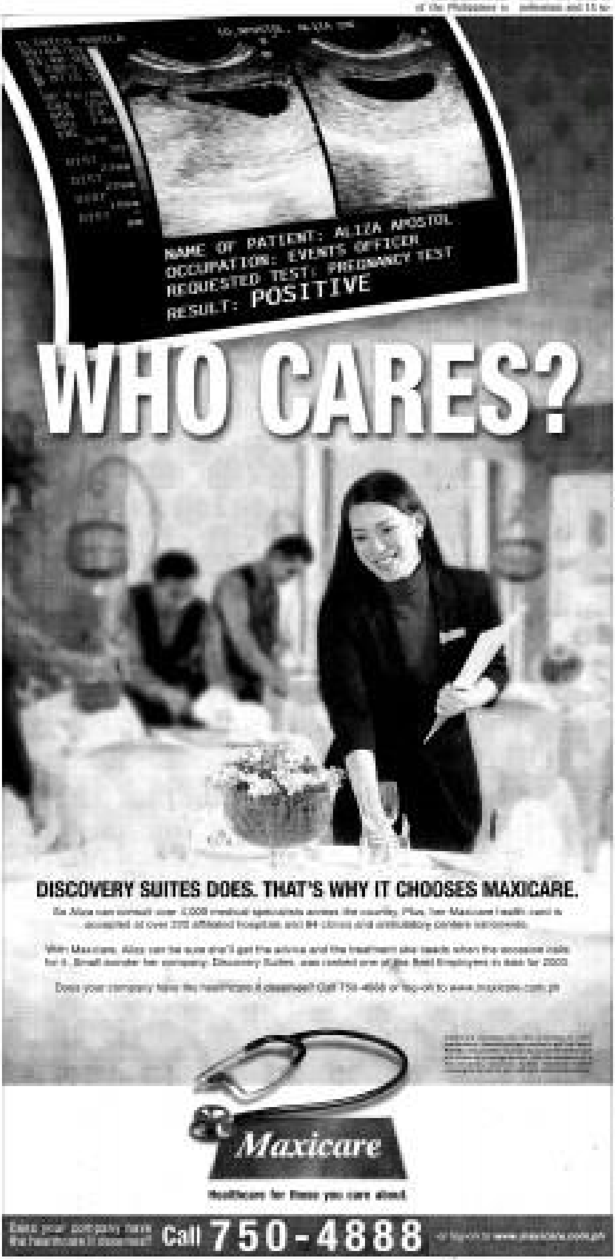


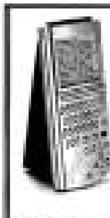
Doves soar past Falcons

Bombings won't deter peacekeepers

By TJ Burgonio

[illegible]







DOLE bars inspections to cut graft

THE DAILY GOSPEL



GMA rebukes foes for violent Makati protest

All-night vigil

Violent dispersal

Financing the rally

Spontaneous

No rally permits

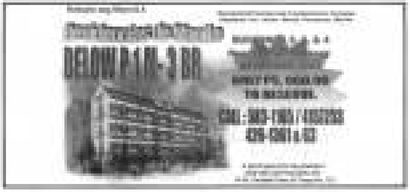
Purely civilian

The WORLD



SADDAM HUSSEIN

Iraq resistance seen as Saddam's 'true' war plan



Japan balks at sending troops to Iraq after attack on Italian base

US: Report shows Iran wants nukes

[illegible]

China to buy 30 Boeing planes for $1.7 billion

[illegible]



Man hits lotto pot 2 times

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
OPINION

Scraping the bottom

EDITORIAL



What will gov't concede to Marcoses et al.?

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

Soulless

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

Getting tough

ANALYSIS



Amando Doronila

A 'star' partner

AT LARGE



Rina Jimenez-David

Interpreting Saguil

LOOKING BACK



Ambeth R. Ocampo

Outstanding leaders

COMMENTARY

THEY SAID

Too much waiting

Mortifying

Relating to Davide

Debt figures are highly understated

LETTERS

A better measure for bar exam success

Imee Marcos at Metro cemeteries

Editorializing in photos

The takeover of Naia control tower

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

Pacquiao deserves more than $.35M, says US trainer

Spurs rip Nets; Lakers prevail



TORONTO'S Vince Carter (left) drives against Los Angeles' Gary Payton in the first quarter of their NBA game.

SPORTSWATCH

King of the Road 10-K run

Veterans show way in Pasig tenpin

Villareta nears PCA main draw

UP Alumni golf at Wack Wack west

Lunas fights Surapol at People's Gym

Perez paces nat'l rallycross series

Buhain, wushu medalists SCOOP guests

15 entries vie for P150,000 PCC prize

Breeder of the year known tonight

Que, Zarate co-leaders

Filipinos match local hero's 67 in China Open

Pagunsan sizzles with 63

ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Blu Boys gun for glory again

2004 Tour qualifying up this weekend

Gonzales, Salao try to keep lead

Agassi pushes Roddick to No. 1

Across the NATION

'Jueteng' back in Pangasinan, says group of students



YOUTH VOTE

Raps readied in slaying of rights activist

Army says Left overreacting to spying

Reconciliation? Joker says it's 'all for show'



JOKER Arroyo

Put substance

Opposition too

Also Imelda

Facilitator on leave

Now acceptable

'Don't run'

Judge's 'body language': She smiled, smirked

Disbarment

More witnesses

New witnesses

Confession

Physical evidence

'Terrors' wow captive audience

Revelations

Bonus

Move over, F4

Real stars

19 Italians killed by suicide bomber

Visiting the wounded

Bomber killed

13 vehicle bombing

US retaliates

US casualties

Jubilant

US ability doubted

METRO

SUERTRES 8 9 5

SIX DIGIT 9 1 6 4 1 6

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 4 23 34 37 43 47

MAYNILAD CONSUMER WOES

Hike in water rate looms

Manila bars beggars, vagrants

DOH: No outbreak in Camanava areas

Fake dollars worth $.4M seized

MetroBriefs

Goodbye, Carding

P7.5M reward

Oil spills snag traffic

9 bus rob suspects

Crame pushers

WPD fields agents

Car-riding crooks

BUSINESS

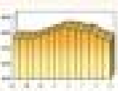
Agriculture growth jumps in 3rd quarter

CURRENCIES



STOCK MARKET

Stocks down 1.44%



GROWTH RATE - AGRICULTURE





Jan.-Sept. OFW remittances up 5% to $5.7B

Net 'hot money' inflow hits $74M

UK firms keen on setting up call centers in RP

NOTICE OF MEETING
ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING OF MEMBERS

AGENDA

Tired of toxic politics

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

[illegible]

BOOKS FOR THE BARRIOS PROGRAM

Courier company delivers a mission to society

CORPORATE CITIZEN





Cocktales ...



5 Japan firms to put up RP units

FIVE more Japanese IT firms are considering setting up operations in the country.

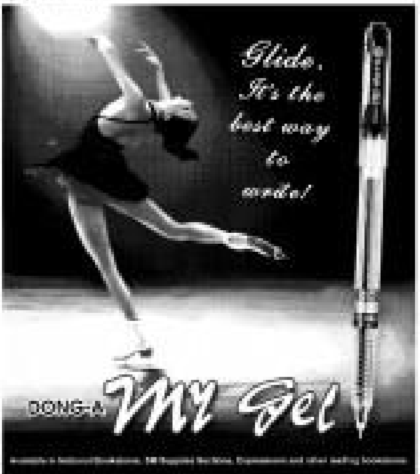
Trade and Industry Secretary Manuel Roxas II said these were NEC Mobiling, Sanyo Information Technology Ltd., Space Creation Co. Ltd., [illegible] Corp., and Epson Software [illegible].

Roxas said NEC Mobiling would engage in the manufacture of [illegible] for mobile phones, Sanyo Information, plant and civil engineering, and [illegible] Corp., software development. Epson Software is planning to put up a research and [illegible] center while Space Creation will do engineering design for [illegible] parts.

Roxas said the development showed the business potential of the Philippines, especially as an outsourcing base for activities involving information technology.

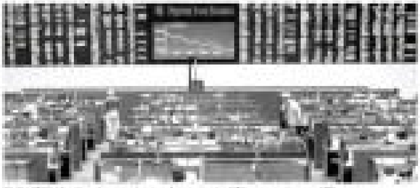
He said the Philippines had been attracting Japanese investors because of the country's skilled labor force. However, he said the country should also work on developing other areas that would entice more businesses to come in.

He said the country should also develop an environment that can sustain a cost-efficient production and people possessing Japanese language skills. —Michelle V. Remo



ABS-CBN defers $150-M bond float

PSE, SEC agree to list bourse's shares by Dec.



Disclosures

Understanding globalization

COMMENTARY

Background

Two examples

Need for policy

Conclusion

Napocor to bid out supply contracts worth ₱9.77B

Cement duty removal worries local makers

[illegible]

Flour millers to pay 10% VAT in advance

[illegible]

CA intervenes in SEC-BCC row

[illegible]

UBS AG putting up office in RP

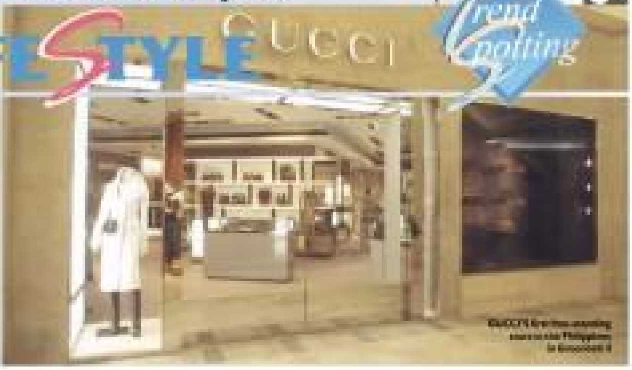
[illegible]

LIFESTYLE

Trend Spotting

An incredibly good start

From the design and spending point of view, the Filipino is not down and out



GUCCI'S first free-standing store in the Philippines is Greenbelt 4

LIFE-STYLED



Thelma Sioson San Juan

[illegible]

Feel-good Sunday

[illegible]



DOMENICO de Sole, outgoing president and CEO of Gucci Group, arrives in Manila for the launch of the Gucci boutique.



ANTON Huang, EVP of Stores Specialists Inc., the exclusive distributor of Gucci in the Philippines; Mimi Pua, president of Gucci Asia Pacific; Eleanor de Sole; Domenico de Sole, president and CEO of Gucci Group; and David Batchelor, GM of The Peninsula Manila



THE INTERIORS of the Gucci boutique in Greenbelt 3

An incredibly good start



FIGURES that embody both elegance and whimsy

ly contemporary but, more important, world-class.

FAME has developed an annual following among international buyers. Manila has become a leg in their Asian swing this time of year.

Last year, even at the peak of SARS, a good number of buyers still stopped by Manila to check out FAME.

This year, more than 2,000 buyers showed up in October—a fulfilling way to mark Citem's Manila FAME International's 20th anniversary.

FAME (Furniture and Apparel Manufacturers Exchange) is the flagship project of Citem (Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions) and is the second longest-running trade show in Asia-Pacific.

This time, we joined the board of judges in selecting the winners of Katha Awards—the distinction given to design excellence. It goes to companies with innovative products, artistic visual merchandising, and creative booth designs, print collateral and website.

Eye-catching

The nominated products alone were enough to make one drool. Of course, our eye focused on the fashion accessories—bags, necklaces and bracelets.

Among the nominees was this wicker bag with leather accents. What caught the eye was the dainty and intricate design etched on the leather. Wicker and leather, the ultimate native chic.

Turned out it was a product of our friend from way back, Vicky Vizcarra Amalingan of R.C. Vizcarra Inc., the stalwart in Philippine handicrafts.



"MANILA bags" for today's global fashion

Vicky replicated her mother's embroidery design on the leather accents of these bags, which explained their intricateness and Old-World touch.

[illegible]





MOTHER-OF-PEARL



LEATHER, the ultimate

[illegible]



THE HOTSHOTS: Ajay Bahla, SVP and GM of MasterCard Southeast Asia; Xavier Loinaz, BPI president; Paolo Villa-Real, MasterCard Philippines country manager; Gigi Montinola, BPI SEVP; and Renato Tan, BPI SVP and head of card banking



MTV VJs Isaac and Christine Ban Diego of Abstrack with Teddie Dario, Paolo Trillo, Janine Dario and Charlie Montoya



STILL in love: Vionada Landon with pal Tastoco of Rocket's U



MADAME Lena Hakansson, Sto. Marianne Hubbard and Olga Severino Martel, host of the lunch-launch

Launching the card with edge, mixing pleasure with purpose

THE RENOWNED Bank of the Philippine Islands has just added another feather to its already super-filled cap by staging the fabulous launching of its newest MasterCard-branded credit card product, the BPI Edge MasterCard.

This new credit card is a milestone not only for the pioneering BPI but also for the credit card industry in the country, with its branded leaves style events implying its unconventionality, uniqueness and innovative spirit.

Without Batting an Eyelash

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen on Kodak film

MasterCard's top honcho Ajay Bhalla, senior vice president and general manager for Southeast Asia, joined in just for this launch, organized by BPI, natch!

Joining him were the local Mastercard rah-rah team.

Heading the BPI stage executives, who came in full attended force, were of emporios, well-respected Xavier Loinaz, BPI president; Aurelio Montinola III, senior executive vice president; Teresita Tan, senior vice president and head of card banking; Eddie Calia, vice president for cards; Rodo Trillo, senior vice president; Miriam Rosas, assistant vice president and merchant head; Nita Chiarelli, senior vice president for marketing; Grace Miranda, vice president for credit card operations; Annie del Mundo, assistant vice president for credit cards; and Asuncion Galugan and Anna Calasnos, manager and assistant manager for marketing and sales, respectively.

The launch drew a mob of predominantly young, hip movers and shakers who reveled in the futuristic look and feel of the production, the DJ's performance, the laser lights show and the fashion show courtesy of Bayani's hip U, excitingly hosted by MTV VJs KC Montero and Patty Laurel.

Attracting a younger audience is an order for the BPI Edge MasterCard as it has a host of youth-oriented features.

Available in vibrant eye-catching colors of blue and silver, the new card gives fashionably hip individuals something to flash daringly wherever they shop, dine, watch a movie or do anything they fancy.

Hey, you guys, grab one today and be with the "in" crowd of BPI.

Glitter and cause

Glamour and glitter were in ample supply at the Makati Shangri-La ballroom—lavishly decked in eye-catching splendor, when Bulgari, the internationally famed jeweler to the jet-setting rich and famous, presented this year's grand Red Cross Ball 2003, all for a worthy cause: the much deserving Philippine National Red Cross.

The PNRC 2003 fund-raising committee chair is also one of our town's hottest hostesses with the mostest, Nedy Tantoco. In her opening remarks, she spoke of "movement being only second to purpose and commitment, the purpose being to raise funds for the heart-warming cause that is Philippine National Red Cross!"

The casting theme was also very close to the keynote address by PNRC governor and lovelier business tycoon, George Yang, and continued on in the invocation of PNRC governor Rosa Rosal, who couldn't make it because of a bad cold but whose message was read by another PNRC governor, Rep. Miguel Zubiri, one of the most eligible men about town, *palangga*.



RED Cross Ball overall chair Nedy Tantoco receives a plaque of appreciation from Red Cross chair Jaime Canatoy, as business tycoon and member of the board George Yang watches with approval.



ALL set to dance: Hot mayor Lito Atienza and gorgeous beauty queen Margie Moran Floirendo



THE GORGEOUS beauties of the Red Cross Ball, print ad and ramp model Aiko Ewan with her pal Audrey Tan



PNRC angels: red-hot ladies Tessie Libero, Cristela Locsin and Baz Locsin-Bieng



WOMEN of style: Mimi Lizares with Marites Pineda, Chingbee Kalaw Cuenca and Kathy de Guzman, who jetted in from Singapore for the Red Cross Ball

Fab prizes

The dashing Makati Shangri-La general manager Harlath Lynch, sitting at one of the tables, disappeared every now and then to ensure everything was going perfectly backstage. It sure was.

The most eagerly anticipated of the many delights of the night was the raffle for the wonderful array of prizes.

The lucky winner of the grand Q83 cruise was Carrie Ruell, while the Caribbean cruise was won by New Age guru and my neighbor, George Moen, and the chill-out gorgeous Mediterranean cruise by Malaysian Ambassador Mohammad Taufik Noor.

Other hot prizes for the lucky winners were a watch, an evening bag and a Logomania handbag from Bulgari, a business-class round-trip on classy and chic Air France to any destination in Europe; and weekend vacations complete with roundtrip airfare to the Pearl of the Pacific resort in Boracay and El Nido resorts in Palawan.

Also raffled off were private sittings with renowned portrait painters and works by famed contemporary national painters.

There were so many winners the whole night that some losers kept saying they "should have won." Well, *palangga*, you'll always find a sour grape in a bunch, *a ver si pez Cacio, 'di bale*?

But the real highlight of this cause-oriented affair was the presentation of plaques of appreciation to the PNRC's "platinum angels," who have each donated a cool P500,000 to the humanitarian organization's work. They were PLDT, Pagcor, Puyat Group of Co., Bulgari and Philippine Daily.

Needless to say, the biggest attraction of the affair was the magnanimous patrons of the three cruise companies—Cunard Line, Costa Cruises and Princess Cruises. Oh, yes, *palangga*.

In January 2004, the elegant Queen Mary 2 will join the Cunard fleet and sail her maiden voyage. To where—oops! I never did find out.

So long, Lena

Southern batcaniana and super-concerned citizen Olga Severino Martel put together a lunch-launch of 12 women ambassadors and wives from the diplo set to say goodbye to her close friend, tall, blonde Lena Hakansson, wife of Swedish Ambassador Ulf Hakansson, who is ending his tour of duty in the country.

To show her sincere affection for Lena, Olga transformed the upper section of the mill going-away to Saliha into a colorful spring garden with lots of lilacs, gerberas, roses, tulips, carnations and exotic greenbelt. Plus, the sweet aroma of sampaguita, scattered all over the table, permeated the room, *palangga*.

Strains of classical music welcomed the ladies, while over lunch, the pianist played pieces from the countries of the different invitees. Needless to say, the gals had a great time.

"This is really a wonderful way of saying goodbye to Lena. It's relaxed, simple, and we can chat and gossip all we want," said one of the ladies present.

Oh, yes, don't forget to catch this Sunday at 8 p.m. Grammy-Award winner Mariah Carey, who will be performing live at the Open Field of the Bonifacio Global City. The concert is part of San Classic Bonifacio World Tour.

We're going to be a blast, I know. I'll be there, *palangga*.



WOMEN of substance: Marlene Mendoza with Irene Martel Francisco, French Ambassador Renee Veyret, Linda Reyes and her sister Dulce Capeda



THE MADRIGAL GALS: Tana in a JC Buendia and her husband Richard Gell with Jamby Madrigal-Valade in a Jojie Lloren and Manny Padilla



SUPER businessman Alex Prieto with wife, Inquirer chair Marixi Prieto, and popular Rep. Miguel Zubiri



HOOK the needle wire.





Your own miniature Fabergé egg pendant

CRAFT

Quail eggs are just the right size to use as pendants, with their delicate shape and fun patterns









INSERT the string.

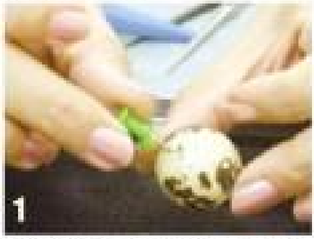




MAKE several knots.









Beauty LIFESTYLE



FAMOUS for its healing and astringent properties, aloe vera is effective against skin blemishes and acne.

Natural is always the best way to be

By Charlene Gonzales-Mühlach
Contributor

NATURAL is always the best way to be, whether it's the way you act, the way you wear your makeup or the food you eat. Somehow, when we hear the words "all natural," it suggests purity or something unchanged.

Oftentimes, people ask me what beauty tips I have picked up through the years. Honestly, I have never given it much thought until now.

Before we came into this hi-tech world, life was simple. There must have been beauty secrets that our ancestors used to enhance their looks. So I have developed the curiosity to find out about all-natural beauty tips and secrets.

Based on my own experience, I use products with the four

Natural is always the best way to be



Milk, avocado, honey and aloe vera hold the deepest beauty secrets



Milk compress

Honey

Avocado

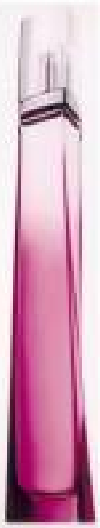
Honey and banana

Aloe vera



Tofu ("tahu")

Scents and sensibilities





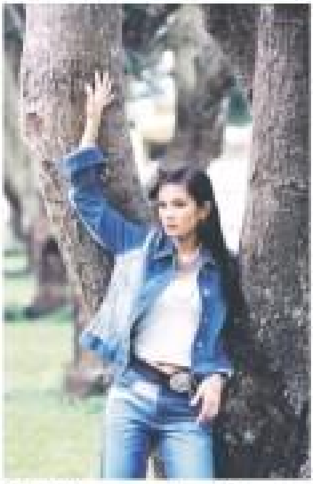












DAYDREAM.



ROADS.

Fashion gets holiday makeover

Yuletide fashion



HORSE WHISPERERS.



MAVERICKS. On Poe: red plaid polo (P1,798) and white cotton tee (P1,198), both from British India, and dark blue denims (P1,898) from Pierre Cardin; on Gianna, dark brown corduroy pencil skirt (P1,998) and olive green tank top (P1,198), both from British India, and coral choker (P850) from LQ; on Christian, white hooded and embroidered polo (P2,298) from British India, and khaki pants (P1,698) from LQ; on Marlon, chocolate brown sleeveless blouse with embroidery (P1,798), white linen skirt (P2,298), black and beige wooden belt (P598) and beige gathered belt (P258), all from British India; on Olivia, pink linen blouse with embroidery (P2,398), cigarette jeans (P2,398) and brown belt with medallion buckle (P1,298), all from British India; and on Edward, red cotton tee (P1,298), cappuccino polo (P2,398), chocolate brown pants (P2,898) and brown belt (P1,698), all from Esprit Men

Fashion gets holiday makeover

Text by Max V. Vergara
Photos by Chito Nucha

THERE may not be the best of times for retailers of imported ready-to-wear brands as the peso continues to sink. But these may not be the worst of times either as several leading names continue to thrive despite the lingering economic crisis.

One such company is Chikadora Specialty Stores Inc., which is in charge of Cinderella's foreign brands. Now on its 35th year in the retail and manufacturing business, Cinderella began to diversify five years ago by adding more foreign names to its mix of in-house brands.

CSSI is the exclusive distributor in the country of Esprit, LQ, British India, Pierre Cardin, Goldlion Signet and Nafnaf. A separate company is now in charge of Cinderella's in-house brands.

"Believe it or not," says Richard Conrad Santos, CSSI's vice president for merchandising, "we're doing better this year than last year. The Christmas spirit has yet to kick in, but I'm confident that sales will continue to pick up in the coming weeks. Christmas has always been a big deal among Filipinos. For one, we love to give presents."

Because of young people's greater exposure to media, particularly the Internet and MTV, relatively conservative Filipinos are also starting to loosen up as far as fashion goes, says Santos. They've likewise become more fashion-forward as they idolize J.Lo, Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake, F4 and the like.

"The fashion business has never been as exciting and as dynamic as it is today," says Santos, a political science graduate from the Ateneo de Manila University. "There's never a dull moment as we keep an eye out for emerging trends season after season. As retailers we always have to be one step ahead."

Santos' dream of becoming a lawyer has had to take a back seat to the family business that his late grandmother Florencia Conrad started. The Conrad matriarch first made children's clothes primarily for daughter



COLORADO CALLING. On Poe: white long-sleeved turtleneck (P698), black leather jacket (P11,798) and black jeans (P1,498), all from Pierre Cardin; and on Marlon, gray crinkled chiffon blouse (P1,698) and gray crinkled chiffon skirt with lace piping (P1,998), both from LQ



SAFARI SURPRISE. On Bianca, beige corduroy trench jacket (P1,998), white knit camisole (P698), and khaki shorts (P898), all from LQ; and on Edward, white muscle shirt (P598), khaki corduroy jeans (P1,798) and brown belt (P528), all from LQ